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From the NIFA Communications Office

NIFA in the News – Week of May 21, 2012

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In the News

Sen. Hoeven details provisions of Senate Ag Committee Farm Bill (Farm and Ranch Guide 5/18). U.S. Sen. John Hoeven, one of the three main craftsmen of the farm bill recently passed by the Senate Ag Committee, was in West Fargo in early May and gave a brief outline of the key provisions of the bill to farmers, ranchers and ag commodity members who had gathered at the grounds of the Red River Valley Fair. *Agricultural Research includes key research programs critical to Land Grant Universities. This provision will also reauthorize the Agricultural Research Service and continues the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) that provides grants to Land Grant Universities for research critical to the region's producers' ability to defend against plant diseases and increase productivity. Link

Plant breeding technology could aid Florida grape growers (The Grower 5/18). Based on their proximity to large Eastern urban areas, Southern growers of muscadine grapes could probably capitalize on fresh-market demand if not for the variety's seediness and short shelf life. But Dennis Gray, a professor of developmental biology at the University of Florida's Mid-Florida Research and Education Center in Apopka, is leading a research team that hopes to address those constraints with seedless, disease-resistant muscadine varieties. Gray's work is being funded in part by a five-year, $2.2 million specialty crop grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National institute of Food and Agriculture. Link

Breast-fed babies' gut microbes contribute to healthy immune systems (EurekAlert 5/21). A new multi-university study reports that differences in bacterial colonization of the infant gut in formula-fed and breast-fed babies lead to changes in the expression of genes involved in the infant's immune system. The study, published in the April 30 issue of BioMed Central's open access journal Genome Biology, is an Editor's Pick. The research was a joint effort of University of Illinois, Texas A&M University, Miami University, and University of Arkansas scientists. Funding was provided by grants from the National Institutes of Health, Hatch support through the

U of I Division of Nutritional Sciences Vision 20/20 program, and a USDA-NIFA Designing Foods for Health grant. Link

Research: 'Modern Portfolio Theory' optimizes conservation practices (Environmental Research Web 5/23). While climate change is likely to alter the spatial distributions of species and habitat types, the nature of those changes is uncertain, making it more difficult for conservationists to implement standard planning models. Research from applied economists at the University of Illinois shows that adapting a theory from the world of finance could help to optimize conservation activities. The research was supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture Hatch Project. Link

Sarcocystis Neurona Genome Project Almost Complete (The Horse 5/24). Dan Howe, PhD, a professor and molecular parasitologist at the University of Kentucky Gluck Equine Research Center, and colleagues are finishing up a three-year Sarcocystis neurona genome project. The primary goal of the project, titled "Genome Sequence for the apicomplexan Sarcocystis neurona," has been to sequence and assemble the genome of S. neurona, the protozoan (single-cell) parasite that causes protozoal myeloencephalitis (EPM) in horses. In 2009 he received a $500,000 grant from the USDA-CSREES (U.S. Department of Agriculture-Cooperative State Research and Extension Service) competitive grants for his research. Link

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